

Fault Lines and Fractures in Political Communities

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I. INTRODUCTION

Kevin Vallier's *Trust in a Polarized Age*¹ is an impressive book that speaks to what many regard as one of the most pressing political problems of our time: the pervasiveness of social distrust and political polarization. In many Western states, politics seems to have devolved into a divisive conflict. The very first three pages suffice for Vallier to paint a grim picture of the situation in the United States: Americans trust their institutions less; Americans trust one another less; and Americans hate members of the opposing political more than they have in any recent time (pp. 1-3). Vallier proposes to address this problem, and the heart of his proposal is the claim that liberal institutions can reconcile political conflict and that compliance with such institutions can lead to greater trust among individuals. In the course of defending this core liberal proposal, Vallier draws on an impressive body of philosophical and social scientific work, developing his solution in a way that most any reader will profit from engaging with. The contribution to theories of public reason in philosophy alone is a valuable advancement in that field, and scholars working in the growing interdisciplinary research program of politics, philosophy, and economics ("PPE") would benefit greatly from studying Vallier's book as a model of that approach.

The basic message in Vallier's book is one of hope. With the right institutions, and with the right reforms, we need not engage in a war-like politic. My aim in the arguments to follow will not be challenge the substance of Vallier's argument—I will take for granted that the kinds of reforms he suggests could restore social trust, and indeed I would welcome such a result if it were true. Rather, my aim is to challenge the range of applicability of his proposed solution. Granting that the solutions Vallier identifies can be effective means of restoring social trust, we may still ask: under what social and political conditions will the solution will be effective? Even if politic need not be war, are there any circumstances where it cannot be anything but war? I will defend an answer in the affirmative—there seem to be some conditions under which political divisions may run too deep to be reconciled.

I should be careful to note that my aim here is only to explore the limits of the applicability of Vallier's solution to the problem of social distrust. I do not mean to claim that any actual political communities, such as those in the US or West that Vallier focuses on, are so fractured that restoring them is impossible, and frankly, I hope that this is not the

case. But, nevertheless, the devolution of politics into an irreconcilable state of war seems to me a real possibility that we must confront.

Section II begins with an examination of pertinent arguments in Vallier's rich book. The remainder of this essay will then be spent developing the conditions under which Vallier's proposed solution to the problem of distrust might not be successful. Section III argues that communities can become divided when members disagree about what rules are, to use Vallier's term of art, central moral rules. Section IV identifies another mechanism that can lead to division; when individuals disagree too much about morality, they may come to regard one another as morally incompetent. These two sections are meant to identify fault lines in political community; they show some mechanisms by which political communities could come to be divided. Section V examines the state of affairs that obtains when fault lines widen into more pervasive divisions. I argue that when members of communities have conclusive reason to distrust one another, Vallier's proposed mechanisms for restoring trust are unlikely to be successful. Section VI concludes.

II. RESTORING TRUST IN POLITICAL COMMUNITIES

The central problem that Vallier takes up in *Trust in a Polarized Age* concerns the fact that politics can devolve into a *state of war*, which he defines as states of affairs characterized by social conditions with low social trust (trust in other citizens) and low political trust (trust in institutions) (p. 20). The solution to the problem of politics-as-war that Vallier defends is what I will call the *liberal institutional solution*: liberal institutions create and sustain the conditions for social and political trust within diverse communities (pp. 20 and 35-40, though the argument for liberal institutions is spread throughout the book).

Diverse political communities are the primary focus of Vallier's analysis. On the face of it, diverse communities seem ill-suited for creating and sustaining high levels of social and political trust. In such communities, individuals will disagree about many moral matters. The moral and ethical life of another may often look to one as unquestionably wrong, corrupt, or misguided. It becomes difficult to sustain attitudes of trust when we think others are deeply immoral (p. 21). Consequently, it seems natural to regard diverse communities as breeding grounds for distrust.

The line of reasoning in the previous paragraph, Vallier contends, is a consequence of the illusion of culpable disagreement. Holding those who disagree with you to be morally flawed is a failure to take account of the fact of evaluative pluralism—"that sincere and informed people can nonculpably disagree about many important matters, including what the good life consists in and what justice requires" (Ibid.). Once we acknowledge the fact of evaluative pluralism, then we see that we cannot sustain the attitudes and perspectives that make up the illusion of culpable disagreement. Accordingly, the possibility of achieving an appealing degree of social and political trust is not undermined in the context of diverse political communities. So, how might we cultivate social and political trust?

Answering that question naturally requires an account of what trust is. Trust, Vallier claims, is a three-place relation of the form: individual A trusts individual B to do some action *F* (p. 23). Trust involves some kind of dependence, so B's doing *F* must be important for some of A's goals. But, when I trust you to do something for me, it is quite different from the attitude I have when I expect or depend on, say, a train arriving on time (Ibid.). I depend on, but do not trust, the train because we can only trust individuals that are participants in a shared moral practice that we regard as moral agents (Ibid.). But mere recognition of agency will not suffice. Even the selfish or the inconsiderate can be moral agents, and it would be hard to trust individuals who reliably defer to their self-interest instead of acting on relevant moral considerations. So, lastly, in order for A to trust B to *F*, it must be the case that A believes that B normally acts on broadly moral considerations of an appropriate degree of significance (p. 24).

One kind of trust that Vallier is especially concerned with, which will also be my focus throughout, is social trust. *Social trust* is trust that others will follow what Vallier calls central moral rules. Vallier presents certain basic moral obligations as central moral rules, such as duties: not to harm without cause; not to kill the innocent; to keep promises; to show gratitude; and to aid the impoverished (p. 24). So, "one socially

trusts when she thinks other moral agents will tend to comply with the publicly recognized moral rules that she needs to rely on in her pursuit of her goals” (Ibid.).²

Bringing these ideas together, we have that for someone to be socially trustworthy, you need to believe that they will act on public moral considerations of an appropriate significance. What kinds of considerations are suitable for grounding trust? Vallier argues that acting on the basis of intelligible reasons is what fits the bill (p. 26). Some reason *r* to *F* is intelligible to members of a given community just in case there is some member of the community *A* for whom *r* is a reason to *F* and other members of the community would know that *r* is a reason for *A* to *F* if they were made to know of *A*’s broader evaluative commitments (for some further idealizing conditions, see pp. 27-9). Seeing an individual act on intelligible reasons is evidence that she is responding to what she should regard as morally significant considerations in the determination of her conduct. And trusting individuals just consists of regarding them as agents who respond to the appropriate kinds of reasons.

These preceding points set the groundwork for the argument defending the liberal institutional solution that takes up the majority of the book. Those arguments follow the same general pattern. Each chapter after the second is spent studying a particular liberal institution in some detail, with the discussion covering the institutions of free civil society, the market, the welfare state, and democratic constitutionalism. In each case, Vallier reviews empirical evidence which supports the claim that the kind of institution in question creates trust for the right reasons, and he follows the review with a defense of the claim that the institution is publicly justified to members of diverse communities. Some rule or rules are publicly justified just when there is no member of the relevant community who has reason to favor the absence of those rules over the rules themselves. The idea is that only those rules that all persons have reason to favor over a state of liberty (where there are no public rules that individuals can hold one another accountable to complying with) are publicly justified. Notice that when some rules are publicly justified, individuals will always have a reason to comply with them. Observing individuals complying with publicly justified rules thus provides individuals with evidence of trustworthiness because such compliance reflects responsiveness to intelligible reasons. So, if liberal institutions are publicly justified, then they can become touchstones of trustworthiness.

In what follows, I will not contend with Vallier’s defense of liberal institutions. Rather, my aim will be the challenge the range of applicability of his liberal institutional solution. Just how divided can society be before restoring trust becomes a lost cause? I will first consider some mechanisms that might engender distrust in diverse communities. These mechanisms identify fault lines in political communities; while there is no guarantee that the distrust-creating process will take hold, when social conditions are as described in the following two sections, there is the possibility of widening divisions in society.

III. UNCOMMON TOUCHSTONES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

The first way in which diverse social conditions can give rise to distrust on Vallier’s model will have to do with the role of central moral rules. These are, recall, publicly recognized moral norms that are believed to be correct, compliance with which serves as evidence of trustworthiness. “Social trust involves trusting others to do *what we collectively regard as the right thing to do*” (p. 24, emphasis added). As mentioned above, the examples of central moral rules that Vallier provides are rather thin moral requirements, such as avoiding harming others without cause.

Relying on such thin moral requirements is an appealing move for Vallier. If the central moral rules are thin moral requirements that most any reasonable person would accept, then they will be rather effective touchstones of trustworthiness in a liberal society. These rules are unique in both being widely held and in being especially weighty sources of motivation. Most members of the population are likely disposed to comply with them and to expect others to comply with them as well.

Notice, however, that crucial to Vallier’s argument is that central rules do not merely *contain* these thin precepts. Rather, for an appealing trust-sustaining equilibrium to obtain, central moral rules must be *exclusively coextensive* with those thin precepts. Failure to comply with a central moral rule, after all, is a

sign of being untrustworthy. So, if some share of the populations comes to hold that certain substantive unshared moral precepts are among the central moral rules, then we might expect distrust-creating behavior to emerge instead.

Let's consider a simple illustration of how this distrust-generating dynamic will function. Suppose we have a world with two moral norms R and Q. R is a thin precept that most everyone accepts, but Q is a substantive rule which, in a diverse society, only some accept. Many members of that society will accordingly have conclusive reason to act on Q. As a result, some members of the population who accept Q will observe some others failing to act on Q. The Q-holders not only believe in Q, they regard it to be a central moral rule. Since social trust is grounded in observing individuals complying with central moral rules, those who accept Q have reason to become less trusting of those who do not comply with Q, even if those who do not comply do so on the basis of conclusive reasons to reject such compliance.

If we add one more claim, we can reach a result of full distrust among members of that population. If we grant the premise that there is generally reciprocity of distrust, that seeing another be untrustworthy disposes one to act in untrustworthy ways in turn, then the mechanism just sketched can lead to a full breakdown of social trust. Those who accept Q see others failing to comply with Q, which leads them to reduce their trust in others. Consequently, those who accept Q might react by acting in untrustworthy ways, which leads others to reduce their trust in them. Perhaps the individuals who accept Q think to themselves, "they aren't following some basic moral rules, so why should I?" If this thought leads Q-holders to be non-compliant with certain other basic moral rules, then other members of society will trust the Q-holders less, perhaps leading them (the non-Q-holders) to deviate from other (non-Q) central moral rules themselves. In this case, we have the makings of an escalating spiral of distrust and divisive social conditions. Q-holders may continue to trust Q-holders while those who reject Q will be distrusted by them and will distrust the Q-holders in turn.

This conclusion critically depends on some persons treating a substantive moral rule that is not the object of widespread agreement as a central moral rule. This strikes me as clearly possible. Examples abound throughout human history of situations where norms that could not be the object of public agreement were treated as central moral norms. Two examples come immediately to mind: Victorian social morality and Jim Crow American South social morality. Both social settings contained what appear to be central moral norms that were oppressive for some group (and, consequently, unjustifiable to them). Failure to comply with those oppressive norms carried with it the kinds of social penalties (and often severe mistreatment) that attend violations of central norms. While such baldly unjust norms might not be included among central norms today, the fact that publicly unjustifiable rules have been central moral rules in the past provides us with reason to hold that it is possible for publicly unjustified moral rules to partially constitute central moral rules today.

So, it is not enough to say that liberal institutions are publicly justified and that if they were touchstones of social trust, they would result in a trust-sustaining equilibrium. We also need an account of how liberal institutions and the norms that make them up could come to be central moral rules in the first place, and moreover, how they could come to be the *only* central moral rules. If among central moral rules were some rules that were not publicly justified, then some members of the relevant community will not comply with them, thus showing the seeds of distrust in that community.

IV. DISAGREEMENT AND DISTRUST

Another way in which diverse social conditions can give rise to distrust has to do with the fact that individuals disagree about substantive moral demands. Naturally, we run up against Vallier's rejection of the illusion of culpable disagreement.³ I will argue that diverse individuals can have evidence that others are incompetent moral agents, and that, consequently, they ought not to trust them. The conditions for distrust are not a consequence of merely neglecting the possibility of evaluative pluralism, but rather the fact that on some moral views, certain rules or principles must be regarded as relatively simple to understand. When the

behavior of others fails to comply with what one regards as a simple moral precept, then one has evidence that others are morally incompetent because they cannot grasp even basic or rudimentary moral claims.

The first claim of the argument just sketched is that assessment of competency plays some role in the determination of trust. People who are competent at some activity normally do that activity well or correctly. A competent doctor will successfully treat her patients, a competent philosopher will argue well, and a competent moral agent will respond to the relevant reasons in the right way. When one shows oneself to be a morally incompetent agent, then that is a ground for distrusting them. The rub is that I might think that you are an incompetent moral agent because your conception of moral norms is far too different from my own.

There are many ways in which one can provide others with evidence that one is incompetent. Important to distinguish for our purposes are what I will call *content-based competency assessments*. The idea is straightforward: I cannot regard you as competent in some context if you fail to understand, or do not know, relatively basic concepts, information, or skills pertinent to that context. In the context of mathematics, if you demonstrate an inability to understand addition, I cannot trust you to perform calculations. Or consider drivers whose regular violation of the rules of the road belies a misunderstanding of those rules—upon observation of such violations, observers will be hard-pressed to trust those individuals qua drivers. Failure to grasp knowledge or skills that are regarded as basic or rudimentary often provides a compelling reason to distrust someone in the relevant context.

Reliance on content-based competency assessment within the context of a diverse society is another way in which social conditions can be such that the liberal institutional solution is unsuccessful. Diverse individuals who disagree about morality may come to regard different reasons or precepts as relatively basic, obvious, or possessing dispositive weight. This will lead them to rely on different standards for content-based competency assessments. And, if others do not accept or abide by those standards, then you will come to regard them as untrustworthy on account of the fact that belief in the moral view that you accept requires regarding those reasons as basic or obvious. In a diverse society where individuals substantively disagree about the content of morality, it seems almost inevitable that some fail to satisfy one's standards of content-based competency assessment. Consequently, individuals might widely regard one another as untrustworthy.

As I mentioned above, I do not think that the preceding argument relies on the illusion of culpable disagreement. This is because on some moral views, you must regard certain reasons as basic. That commitment simply comes with the territory of regarding your moral view as true or correct. To take one example, perfectionists think that certain kinds of activities are obviously conducive to human flourishing. If you think perfectionism is true, odds are that you think that there are some circumstances in individual lives that, when they obtain, make that person's life go well. Perfectionists are under no illusion when they regard as incompetent individuals who fail to grasp even the most basic conditions for a flourishing life. Rather, the perfectionist's assessment of incompetence is well-grounded in the evidence they have, namely the moral view they hold to be true and their observation of the behavior of others. Appeal to evaluative pluralism will be misplaced here, because, if one's moral view takes for granted that certain principles or values are simple and easy to understand, then the only way to do away with that judgment of triviality would be to have less confidence in one's own moral view. This demands more of individuals than good-faith toleration of disagreement; it requires them to be skeptical of their own moral commitments.

Distrust grounded in content-based competency assessments of diverse persons is, I think, not all that outlandish a possibility, and indeed it may even be an accurate account of some of the political divisions we have nowadays. One side claims: it is so obvious that gender roles are oppressive and harm women, such that any competent moral agent will regard them as morally bad. Conversely the other side may claim: it is so obvious that gender roles are basic moral norms necessary for the stability of society, that only the most perverse of persons will support undermining them. It is so obvious that the Bible is necessary for a moral education, that attempts to liberalize education will only serve to produce morally corrupt persons. It is so obvious that the church and state must be separated, that anyone advocating for the use of religious texts in

public education is morally inept. On we go, until nothing is more obvious than the fact that the other side is in a fundamental way morally incompetent, unable to grasp basic moral reasons. You cannot trust people who you think are so morally incompetent; you can only hope to contain the harm that they might otherwise cause.

V. FRACTURED PUBLICS

The previous two sections have aimed to identify some mechanisms by which Vallier's liberal institutional solution might be frustrated. The mechanisms, of course, depend on certain social conditions obtaining in order to bring about the results just sketched. There must be sufficient disagreement about what moral rules are central, or individuals must hold diverse standards of content-based competency assessments, in order for the relevant group to be pushed towards greater and greater distrust. In this section, I will distinguish two different kinds of untrusting social conditions, and I will argue that in one that might be realized, restoration of trust seems unlikely.

Since my focus will be on communities within which there is a great deal of distrust, we will naturally be concerned with what Vallier characterizes as a state of war. Some community is in a state of war, recall, just when there is low social and political trust among members of that community (p. 20). Important for the following purposes is a distinction between two kinds of states of wars. First, we have how I think Vallier conceives of the state of war, which is as a state of distrust which obtains on account of *lack of reasons to trust*. Second is an understanding of the state of war as a state of distrust that obtains because individuals *have good reason to distrust* one another. Let us say that when a political community has widespread distrust on the basis of negative reasons (i.e. because of lack of reasons to trust), then they are in a *forgiving* state of war. In contrast, when a political community has widespread distrust on the basis of positive reasons (i.e. because of possessing reasons to distrust others), then they are in a *nasty* state of war. The prospects of restoring trust are much dimmer in a nasty state of war.

The difference between forgiving and nasty states of war has to do with why individuals distrust one another. In a forgiving state, members of the relevant community simply have a dearth of reasons to trust one another. Social trust is unestablished in the forgiving state of war, whereas social *distrust* is established in the nasty state of war.

The forgiving characterization allows for an appealing solution, one which I think Vallier ultimately advocates for. On the forgiving characterization, what is needed is a way to introduce reasons for individuals to trust one another. If individuals can be incentivized to be trustworthy, and others observe this, trust can be restored in a forgiving state of war. Accordingly, Vallier's practical proposals predominantly concern motivating individuals to act in trustworthy ways (e.g. p. 278).

The kinds of solutions that might be successful in a forgiving state of war will not be successful in a nasty one. Under nasty conditions, we must first overcome the fact that individuals believe that they have good reason to distrust one another. If individuals already believe other parties to be inappropriate objects of trust, then simply providing an incentive to trust will not be sufficient to induce trustworthy behavior.

The difference between these two kinds of states of war can be illustrated using some simple games. To keep matters especially simple, let us suppose that we are concerned with strictly two-person interactions, and that individuals have two strategies available to them: they can act on the basis of mutually accepted (i.e. publicly justified, in Vallier's terms) norms (the trustworthy strategy), or they can act on what they believe to be the true or correct moral requirements (the untrustworthy strategy). I will take for granted that in a diverse society, these two strategies will require distinct courses of conduct, and moreover that individuals hold different moral norms to be true or correct.

Now, a forgiving state of war can be modeled as a straightforward assurance problem, as shown by figure 1.

Figure 1. The Forgiven State of War

	Publicly Justified Norms	Private Norms
Publicly Justified Norms	1, 1	4, 2
Private Norms	2, 4	3, 3

The numbers represent the ordinal ranking for row and column player respectively, with 1 being the most preferred. Both parties stand to gain the most by mutually acting on publicly justified norms. However, the worst outcome for either individual is to act in a mutually acceptable way unilaterally—one gives up advancing the moral ends they hold to be true, while the other advances the moral ends one has good reason to think are incorrect. I am assuming here that publicly justified norms will typically not be what one believes to be the objectively morally best norms. The idea is that if a norm is to be mutually acceptable to persons holding diverse religious, moral, and philosophical commitments, then norm will involve some degree of compromise on what all of those diverse persons believe to be the objectively best moral norms. For us to find a norm that all can accept we will all have to make concessions with respect to what we believe to be objectively morally best.

The idea underlying the characterization of motives in the forgiving state of war is that parties would most desire to live in a cooperative social setting where persons mutually adhere to a publicly justified norm—that is, they would prefer that there be an environment where diverse persons trust one another. While such parties understand that realizing such a social environment requires compromising on the pursuit of some of their private moral commitments, they nevertheless see such compromise as worthwhile provided other parties make a similar concession as well. The problem facing parties is simply that they lack the assurance that others will follow suit. Straightforward incentive mechanisms can induce trustworthy behavior. If individuals were rewarded for acting on publicly justified norms regardless of how others behaved, and such that the reward offset the cost of forgoing the pursuit of their private norms even if others did not, then acting on publicly justified norms can become a dominant strategy for players, in the sense that it is always worthwhile for individuals to comply with publicly justified norms regardless of whether others do so or not. Inducing some individuals to act on publicly justified norms will allow others to observe trustworthy behavior, which, on Vallier’s account, should ground some increase in social trust. If we grant again that there is reciprocity of trustworthiness, we should then expect that one’s observation of incentive-induced compliance with publicly justified norms will lead one to comply with publicly justified norms as well. Here, we see the beginnings of the virtuous circle of trust that Vallier argues liberal institutions will ground.

Prospects are not quite so bright in the case of a nasty state of war. In this state, one has compelling reason to distrust others. Perhaps it is because they have observed failures to comply with (what they believe) are central moral rules, or perhaps it is because they regard other parties as incompetent moral agents. For such agents there is no reason to acquiesce to the claims that others advance; other parties are misguided, depraved, or just too stupid to understand what is right. Why stick your neck out just to be burned by the immoral and the inept? One has better reason to go their own way and advance true morality. Figure 2 depicts a simplified version of this state of affairs.

Figure 2. The Nasty State of War

	Publicly Justified Norms	Private Norms
Publicly Justified Norms	2, 2	4, 1
Private Norms	1, 4	3, 3

Many of the assumptions underlying the forgiving state of war hold here as well, with the exception of one important change. This model continues to assume that parties will have to make mutual concessions on their moral commitments to act on mutually acceptable norms. The main difference between this situation and the forgiving state of war is that parties no longer think it worthwhile to compromise on their moral commitments in order to establish conditions of social trust. The underlying idea is that if parties regard themselves as having positive reason to distrust one another, then they will not view the state of affairs where mutual trust is established as one worthy of pursuing. This is not to say that the parties see no value in a state of affairs where there is mutual trust, but rather, that since they view one another as being untrustworthy, they do not view compromise of their personal moral commitments as a cost worth taking on to establish social trust.

So, in the nasty state of war, the worst-case outcome for an individual would be that of making compromises on (her conception of) true morality by acting on publicly justified norms while the other party pursues their own private norms. The idea here is that persons will think that it is better to advance (what they believe to be) true morality somewhat, and allow the other to act immorally, than acquiesce fully in immorality. Similarly, having the other party acquiesce to publicly justified norms is always better for one—better that there be some restraints on others' pursuit of immorality than none at all. Having the other acquiesce while one pursues their own private norms is the best outcome; true morality is advanced while those pursuing misguided conceptions of morality subject themselves to some restrictions. Acting on private norms in this case is a dominant strategy. Consequently, we find parties locked in a Prisoners' Dilemma, both mutually pursuing their private norms of morality.

The nasty state of war is a far cry away from having of social trust restored. Acting on private norms is a dominant strategy, so all have conclusive reasons to act in ways that ground judgments of distrust in others regardless of the behavior of others. Under these conditions, I find it doubtful that the liberal institutional solution can be successful. From there, the hope is that the virtuous circle of trusting can take hold.

To be more precise, I think that there are two challenges facing the liberal institutional solution in a nasty state of war. In the first place, there is a question of institutional first movers—who has reason to introduce liberal institutions in a nasty state of war? If you have sufficient political power to introduce liberal institutional reform, then you will also have sufficient power to introduce other kinds of institutional reform that better reflect your private moral convictions. In a situation where acting on private convictions is a dominant strategy, why would any agent with such power forego the opportunity to advance what they believe to be morally required? Second, there remains the challenge of getting individuals to comply with publicly justified norms, supposing we resolve the problem of institutional first movers. Why should individuals forego advancing (what they believe to be) correct moral ends, especially when they have no reason to expect the same of others? Even if liberal institutions are in place, compromising on one's moral commitments when they have reason to distrust others will still not be a worthwhile strategy. These are, of course, problems that are familiar from any social context that instantiates a Prisoners' Dilemma. When persons are locked in such a Dilemma, mutual non-compliance seems to be the inescapable outcome. Unlike in the forgiving state of war, in the nasty state of war social division run so deep as to leave little room for the seeds of trust to take root.

VI. CONCLUSION

Vallier's book provides a rich and compelling argument for how we might restore trust in divided societies. I have not aimed to challenge Vallier's claim that his proposed solutions may suffice restore trust in our own societies; rather, my contention has been that his solutions may not apply to all political circumstances, that there be some situations where there is simply no solution to the problem of politics as war.

NOTES

- 1 All page numbers in parenthesis will be references to Kevin Vallier *Trust in a Polarized Age*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- 2 Notice that publicly recognized moral rules need not be true or correct moral principles. Presumably, one could live in a society where public moral rules establish distinctly immoral practices, such as slavery. The difficulties posed by disagreements about true moral requirements is a theme considered in greater detail in section IV below.
- 3 Vallier's rejection of the illusion of culpable disagreement is not a rejection of the possibility of culpable disagreement as such. The illusion of culpable disagreement only concerns treating another's disagreement as a failing on her part because she accepts a different religious, moral, or philosophical doctrines than oneself. The possibility of reasonable pluralism about such questions is the ground for rejecting attributions of culpable disagreement in such cases. Vallier's view allows for culpable disagreement with respect to questions that do not admit of such reasonable pluralism.